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An Open Letter to PRESIDENT JOHNSON

Dear Mr. President:

As citizens of the United States, we must voice our gravest concern over the strife in Cyprus, which has been precipitated by the unilateral efforts of Greek Cypriots to set aside the Cyprus Republic's Constitution and freely-contracted international treaties.

To achieve their selfish ambitions at any cost, these Greek Cypriots—as widely reported by the neutral international press—showed no mercy in attacking Turkish Cypriot women, children and old people in accordance with their pre-conceived plan to annihilate the Turkish population of the island.

We protest this flagrant violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In assessing the present dispute, its causes and remedial actions to be taken, we dare not, Mr. President, lose sight of the realities which led to the creation of the Cyprus Republic as an independent state. We could be dangerously misled if we accept the malicious, self-aggrandizing view that the 3-year-old Constitution is now an ill-conceived and obsolete document. Instead, thoughtful examination of the controversy commends careful study of the reasons which necessitated specific checks and balances in the island's Constitution.

As is well-known, Mr. President, two distinct ethnic communities—Greek and Turkish—have lived side by side in Cyprus for centuries. Admittedly, the Greek community is the larger of the two. But the importance of 120,000 Turkish Cypriots in a total population of about 580,000 cannot be minimized by quoting percentages. It is also well-known that the Greek Cypriots have been striving for "Enosis" . . . union with Greece, while the Turkish community sought the partition of Cyprus between Greece and Turkey, in accordance with Article 73 (b) of the United Nations Charter which provides that due account should be taken of the political aspirations of non-self-governing peoples in promoting their independence.

The deep interest of both Greece and Turkey in Cyprus is natural and timeless. But when pursuit of respective political aims by the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities on Cyprus reached proportions threatening a confrontation between Greece and Turkey which would weaken the NATO Alliance in the Eastern Mediterranean, compromise became mandatory.

To ward off impending danger, the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey—along with the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities—agreed on the creation of an independent State of Cyprus based on partnership of the two ethnic communities. With political foresight, and in the full spirit of compromise, the new State was placed under the joint guarantee of the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey in order to insure that the constitutional set-up of the island would not be changed to the detriment of any of the parties concerned.

The Turkish Cypriot community is not a privileged minority, as so often mistakenly presented. It is, instead, a partner in the Republic's administration, with its numerical ratio proportionately reflected in Constitutional safeguards. Therefore, those sections of the Cyprus Constitution which set forth the rights of Turkish Cypriots must be looked upon as terms of partnership and the basis for collaboration; not as laws that give unusual privileges to a minority of the population.

If such collaboration so essential to the smooth functioning of any democracy has been missing in Cyprus, the blame must rest with the Greek Cypriot community.

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The Constitutional crisis, Mr. President, has only recently come into the open. But it began, and has continued ever since August, 1960, when the Republic of Cyprus became a Constitutional entity. It was precipitated by persistent, unjustified and illegal refusal of Greek Cypriot political leaders, in virtual control of the Republic's administration, to observe the Constitutional provisions aimed at protecting Turkish Cypriots against "second class citizenship."

In one instance of flagrant disregard of the rights of the Turkish Cypriot community, the Greek Cypriots defied a Constitutional Court order by continually blocking legislation regarding the setting up of municipalities. Although the Cyprus Constitution stipulates that separate municipalities shall be set up, the Greek Cypriot President declared he would not allow enactment of this legislation and that he would not listen to the judgment of the Constitutional Court.

It is distressing, but true, that the Constitutional Court's President—a neutral German—resigned as the result of President Makarios' negative attitude toward the rule of law of this vital Constitutional guarantee . . . only one of many deplorable violations of the Constitution and the Republic's international treaties.

Archbishop Makarios has often acted in an unlawful manner, despite his given word, despite the agreements he solemnly signed, and despite his eminence as a religious leader. His actions, in retrospect, have brought the needless massacre of innocent people. To our fellow citizens of the United States, imbued with the highest principles of justice and equity, we leave the judgment of these atrocities and the outspoken desire of President Makarios to renounce freely-contracted agreements.

President Makarios, who presented his inflammatory 13 amendments to the Constitution in November as a provocative weapon in an already serious situation, has characterized these amendments as innocent changes to achieve more efficient government. They are, in fact, Mr. President, thinly disguised efforts to completely abrogate the Constitution and the treaties which shaped and guaranteed the simple rights of the Turkish Cypriot community.

The Greek Cypriots, Mr. President, clamor incessantly for a unitarian regime in Cyprus for one selfish reason. They look upon a bonafide and Constitutional partnership in executive and legislative functions, vested in the Turkish Cypriot community, as an impediment to their realization of "Enosis" . . . the age-old dream of union with Greece. A federal system of shared governmental responsibilities like our own, is generally best suited for societies of varying ethnic backgrounds. This truth is particularly valid in Cyprus, where deep-rooted rivalries can so readily be nurtured when political aspirations of the majority raise justified suspicions.

Yet the Greek Cypriot leadership obstinately clings to its dream of a unitarian State . . . even at the peril of serious international strife.

The bloody events of last December, Mr. President, have proved beyond any doubt that survival of the Republic of Cyprus demands a system of firm and effective Constitutional guarantees.

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Only the timely intervention of the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey—the three guarantors of Cypriot independence—checked the massacre of Turkish Cypriots in late December. We share the shock and indignation of all Americans, Mr. President, in the wanton campaign of genocide so violently launched by the Greek Cypriot community. This tragic experience gives terrifying evidence of the danger of leaving Turkish Cypriots to the mercy of the island's Greek Cypriot community.

The present Constitutional guarantees must be continued. They deserve, if anything, to be made more effective.

We believe, Mr. President, that the United States should immediately speak out in strong defense of international law. To postpone our condemnation of ruthless violation of treaties—in Cyprus or anywhere—is only to condone the violence that is inevitably suffered by people who lose their Constitutional protection.

As a nation which honors its own international commitments, we must insist that others behave in a similar manner. If we are to “look the other way”—while international treaties are flagrantly broken scarcely three years after their ratification—we sow nothing but the seeds of international anarchy . . . from which only enemies of peace can reap rewards.

Respectfully,
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